



TESTIMONY TO THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HB 429 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Agencies - Body-Worn Cameras

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng - LWVMD President

DATE: March 1, 2022

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) supports House Bill 429: Public Safety - Law Enforcement Agencies - Body-Worn Cameras (Kwamena's Law). The bill expands statewide body-worn camera requirements to include plainclothes officers, armed off-duty officers, and municipal police departments, reducing the number of police/civilian interactions that are unrecorded.

In 2021 the Maryland General Assembly passed SB 71, a statewide body-worn camera requirement for all county and state police officers who "regularly interact with members of the public as a regular part of the law enforcement officer's official duties." However, SB71 does not apply to the plainclothes municipal officers.

Kwamena's Law is important because plainclothes officers have a documented history of excessive force and misconduct. For example, in Montgomery County, three of the five men killed by police in 2021 were killed by off-duty officers. Maryland must require the same transparency and accountability for plainclothes and off-duty police officers as for on-duty, uniformed officers.

The League of Women Voters advocates against systemic racism in the justice system and, at a minimum, for **preventing excessive force and brutality by law enforcement**. We believe that **all people of color deserve equal protection under the law**, which is necessary if we are truly to become a nation "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The League, representing 1500+ concerned citizens throughout Maryland, urges the committee to vote in support of House Bill 429.